

F-35s AND THEIR IMPACTS ON OUR COMMUNITIES

Facts vs. Myths

The United States Air Force has proposed placing eighteen F-35 fighter jets at Truax Air National Guard Base, starting in 2023. The Air Force's own draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) concludes that these jets will substantially negatively impact our eastside and northside communities, threatening to ruin some of our neighborhoods. Our community deserves better.

THOUSANDS OF COMMUNITY MEMBERS WILL EXPERIENCE INTENSE NOISE, DISRUPTION & POSSIBLY DISPLACEMENT

Based on modeling conducted by the Air Force, the EIS specifically concludes that the F-35s will result in exposing 1,019 households and 2,215 individuals to noise that is potentially "incompatible with residential use." The Executive Summary of the EIS specifically concludes that "there would be significant disproportionate impacts to low-income and minority populations as well as children" (ES-26).

Though these individuals may be eligible for federal help with sound proofing their homes, there is no guarantee these funds will be secured and available, which would take several years after the arrivals of the F-35s to secure and require an additional sound study by the Dane County Regional Airport.

- **F-35s produce more intense noise than the F-16s.**

In general, the Air Force has concluded that F-35s are substantially louder than F-16s. In a general comparison chart, they estimate that F-35s are 6 dB SEL louder at takeoff and 10dB SEL louder during landing (Appendix E-11). This translates into F-35s being two times louder than the F-16s at landing. The Air Force estimated in Burlington, Vermont, the F-35s are four times louder than the F-16s (Burlington Final EIS, BR4-23). This same analysis for Wisconsin is missing in the EIS.

The Air Force does predicts that the Carpenter-Ridgeway neighborhood, a diverse community with 43.9% people of color, will experience flyover noise of 114 decibels SEL, or the equivalent of a jackhammer type blast (EIS Final Noise Analysis, p. 36).

[Hearing loss can occur with regular exposure to noise levels of 110 decibels or more for periods longer than one minute.](#)

- **F-35s will take off and land significantly more than current F-16s**

The EIS states that military jet take off and landings will increase by 47% initially, from 4,900 operations to 7,190 operations, before decreasing at some unspecific point to 6,222 operations (EIS, WI-4). The Air Force has stated that this increase is due to more F-35s flying

simultaneously (Final Noise Analysis, p. 26). It is important to understand that the noise analysis in the EIS is based on one F-35 flying, not a group of F-35s flying in close proximity, which would be even louder. In a response to Congressman Mark Pocan's specific question about number of flights taking off and landing in Madison, the Air Force again reaffirmed these predictions.

CHILDREN WILL BE SIGNIFICANTLY NEGATIVELY IMPACTED BY F-35s

Though the EIS specifically concludes that children will be disproportionately harmed by the F-35s, as the communities most impacted have large populations of children, they fail to consider the impact of the F-35s on most of the dozen K-12 schools and over a dozen preschools within and just outside of the intense noise zone.

Wisconsin has some of the biggest opportunity gaps for students of color in the country. F-35s will be flying in close proximity to schools with a high percentage of children of color.

[According to the City's Neighborhood Indicators Project](#), the neighborhoods around the airport have some of the lowest percentages of young children who are "kindergarten ready."

Hawthorne Elementary school is in close proximity to the Carpenter-Ridgeway neighborhood, estimated in the EIS to experience some of the biggest noise disruptions from the F-35s, but falls just outside the most intense noise border modeled in the EIS. Hawthorne Elementary has 67.9% low-income students, 34% English as a second language learners, and 74.3% students of color.

The EIS specifically recognizes that "While there are many factors that can contribute to learning deficits in school-aged children, there is increasing awareness that chronic exposure to high aircraft noise levels may impair learning." The EIS cites studies that underscore the negative impacts of aircraft noise on learning, including impaired reading comprehension and recognition memory (Appendix E, pp. 31-32).

COMMUNITIES OF COLOR WILL BE DISPROPORTIONATELY NEGATIVELY IMPACTED

Communities of color experience significant racial disparities in Madison, including in health and well-being, incarceration, employment, wages, and homelessness.

Though the EIS specifically states that communities of color will be disproportionately impacted by F-35s, an analysis done by the City of Madison concludes that the EIS "understated" the impact: "While the EIS acknowledges it has a disproportional impact on persons of color, its methodology results in this issue being understated", including in the heavily impacted Carpenter Ridgeway neighborhood, comprised of 43.9% person of color (City Analysis, p. 2).

Further, there are concentrations of poverty and persons of color just outside the most intense noise area, including the CDA Truax housing, CDA Webb-Rethke townhomes and other housing near Worthington Park, and near the intersection of Packers Avenue and Northport Drive. While

these areas will also experience intense noise, they may not be eligible for federal sound mitigation money (City Analysis, pp. 2-3). Individuals of color negatively impacted may have very limited or no options should their homes be impacted by intense noise.

LOW-INCOME COMMUNITIES WILL BE DISPROPORTIONATELY NEGATIVELY IMPACTED

The current proposal will significantly hurt low-income individuals accessing affordable housing on both the North and Eastsides of Madison. The City Staff report cites, “Rents and home values inside the 65 dB contour are significantly more affordable than the City as a whole. Rents are generally 10-20% lower than Madison’s median rent according to census block level 5-year data” (City Staff Analysis, page 3).

With housing costs rapidly rising across Madison combined with low housing availability, “these areas play an important role in Madison’s overall housing picture” (City Staff Analysis, 3). “Preserving these as livable neighborhoods going forward...is certainly in Madison’s best interest” (City Staff Analysis, 3). Like persons of color impacted, low-income individuals may have few to no housing options.

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH WILL BE NEGATIVELY IMPACTED BY F-35s

F-35 jets degrade the quality of our environment. With the introduction of the F-35s, the draft EIS details that they will emit 12,478 tons of additional CO₂ equivalent emissions into our air, an increase of 135% (EIS WI-51). This translates into 2,438 additional passenger vehicles on our roads, driving an annual average of 11,500 miles (EIS WI-52). The EIS concludes “. . . in combination with past and future emissions from all other sources, they would contribute incrementally to the global warming that produces the adverse effects of climate change” (EIS, WI-51). Researchers have found a cause and effect link between carbon dioxide emissions, increasing pollution and resulting health problems, including additional deaths, respiratory illness and asthma (Jacobson, 2008).

The Truax Air National Guard base has also been identified as a significant contributor to toxic chemical contamination from per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances, or PFAS, which are groups of chemicals found in firefighting foam and other water resistant items. Requests by the Wisconsin DNR for immediate further investigation and mitigation of this contamination has not been acted upon by the Department of Defense that does not consider this cleanup a priority.

The Madison Water Utility has called for the Air Force to fully investigate and define the area of contamination, stating “This is not an acceptable position for Madison and its residents, who rightfully expect to have clean and safe drinking water available to them without bearing the high cost of additionally treating or replacing productive drinking water wells.”

A City of Madison analysis also cites that “It is anticipated PFAS from the 115 Fighter Wing will continue to contaminate the City of Madison unit well #15 for decades to come” (Page 6).

DON'T BELIEVE THE MYTHS

Myth #1: Truax will Close Without the F-35s

Reality: The Air Force has never said that Truax National Guard Base will lose its flying mission without the F-35s or is in jeopardy of closing. In fact, the Air Force has characterized such assertions by F-35 proponents as “a leap” requiring “two and three assumptions” (*Wisconsin State Journal*, 9/13/19). The Air Force has stated that some other options for Truax would be to phase in updated F-16s (*Id*). By all accounts, Truax is a strategically important base for the military and was not selected for closure under the last federal Base Realignment and Closure process which concluded in 2005.

Myth #2: Hundreds of Jobs and millions of dollars will be lost if Truax doesn't get the F-35s.

Reality: The Air Force states that the long-term economic impact of F-35s is negligible and will result in 64 additional military personnel (Draft EIS, ES-25).

Myth #3: The Air Force's draft Environmental Impact Statement is presenting the “worst” case scenario

Reality: The Air force is tasked with presenting “in depth, accurate analysis” in the EIS, rather than the “worst” case scenario (EIS preface). It appears, however, that the draft EIS makes assumptions that might lead to it being the “best” case scenario. First, it only accounts for afterburner usage of 0-5%, when in reality the afterburner usage of existing F-35s has been much higher. Increased afterburner usage could substantially increase noise and change the noise contour maps. Second, the Air Force's sound analysis only takes into account the noise generated from a single F-35 jet. In reality, the Air Force has stated that it plans to fly a larger number of F-35 jets simultaneously, producing even more noise from multiple jets (Final Noise Analysis, p. 26).

TAKE ACTION TO STOP THE F-35s

- **Your voice matters!** Public comments can be made to the Air Force until **November 1st**.
 - **To submit comments online**, follow this link:
<http://www.angf35eis.com/Comments.aspx>
 - **To submit comments by email**, send emails to Ramon Ortiz at usaf.jbanafw.ngb-a4.mbx.a4a-nepa-comments@mail.mil
- **Contact your Federal Delegation!**
 - **Senator Tammy Baldwin – 608-264-5338**
 - **Senator Ron Johnson - (608) 240-9629**
 - **Representative Mark Pocan - 608-258-9800**
- **Sign the Save our Skies Petition** [here](#).
- **Sign up for updates from the Safe Skies, Clean Water Coalition** [here](#).